

**The 2006 Annual  
ONE NIGHT COUNT:  
People who are Homeless in  
King County, Washington**

Report prepared by:  
The Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness - One Night Count Committee, and  
King County Housing and Community Development - Homeless Housing Programs

***The Seattle-King County One Night Count of Homeless people includes persons surviving on the streets in targeted areas of King County, as well as those in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs throughout the entire County.***

***On January 27, 2006 1,946 unsheltered people were counted during the 3 hours of the Street Count; 2,463 people were being served by emergency shelters, and 3,501 were in transitional housing programs.***

## **Introduction**

The One Night Count (ONC) is a snapshot of homelessness in Seattle – King County. It consists of an unsheltered or ‘street’ count, and a survey of emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.

Two thousand and six marks the 26<sup>th</sup> year that Seattle-King County has undertaken a point-in-time count of people who are homeless in our communities. For the first 25 years, under the leadership of Operation Nightwatch and the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH), the ONC took place annually in October. However, in 2006, the count moved to January to conform to new federal standards of practice; the street count and full survey took place on January 26.

How the count numbers have been affected by this change in when the count occurs is not yet clear. It will take some years to distinguish what may be a function of counting in January rather than October (i.e., weather differences, winter response shelters) from what is a true trend or change.

## **Unsheltered or ‘Street’ Count**

The Seattle-King County homeless street count is led by Operation Nightwatch and the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH). It consists of a ‘moment in time’ unduplicated tally of people living ‘on the street’ downtown and in outlying neighborhoods of Seattle, Kent, White Center, the county’s North End (Shoreline, Bothell, Kenmore), and the Eastside (Redmond, Bellevue, Kirkland). In 2006, Federal Way was added to the Count. The Coalition plans to continue expanding the boundaries of the unsheltered count in order to provide a more complete depiction of homelessness in King County.

Because homeless people go to great lengths to protect themselves from view in an effort to survive, the street count does not reflect the exact number of people unsheltered in our region. The unsheltered count does not fully capture data about homeless people living in places which have been determined to be too great a liability to enter: abandoned buildings, sleeping on

private property, dense underbrush. The Count is intended to foster an understanding of the patterns of survival for people who sleep in publicly accessible areas.

### **Shelter and Transitional Housing Survey**

The annual One Night Count also includes a survey of Seattle-King County's sheltered homeless community. This component of the 2006 count was carried out by King County Housing and Community Development - Homeless Housing Programs. Data were provided by 58 emergency shelter and 133 transitional housing programs<sup>1</sup>, which represents 97 percent of the shelter and transitional housing programs found in the King County Inventory of Homeless Units and Beds.

The survey, which is conducted on the same night as the unsheltered count, produces unduplicated data on people utilizing homeless services at a given point in time. The staff in programs serving people who are homeless complete a survey that offers a profile of the people staying in emergency shelters and transitional housing, on that particular night. It must be noted that while the information reported in the survey gives us a good picture of the number and the characteristics of individuals and households receiving services at the time of the survey, it does not reflect individuals in the homeless community who are not connected to services.

The One Night Count provides a count and demographic data on individuals residing in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs at a point in time, but undercounts the unsheltered population and provides little information about the people who are unsheltered. Although methodology is improved every year, this source of data will always paint only a partial picture of people who are homeless in King County.

Neither the unsheltered count nor the survey captures the hundreds of people throughout the county that are "couch-surfing," staying with friends or relatives for a few nights or weeks here and there. Nor does this effort seek to depict the people living in substandard housing, in trailers without running water or electricity in the more rural areas of the county, the many families that are secretly doubled or tripled up on a permanent basis in one unit, or the hundreds of people that are paying for motel rooms on a daily or weekly basis hoping to somehow save enough money for a permanent place of their own.

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<sup>1</sup> *Emergency Shelter* is short-term temporary shelter from the elements and unsafe streets. Programs are either facility-based or flexible capacity (i.e., hotel/motel vouchers). *Transitional Housing* is temporary housing, ranging from 90 days to 24 months, with supportive services designed to help people make the transition from homelessness to permanent housing.

## Unsheltered / 'Street' Count

The 2006 Unsheltered Count found a total of 1,946 people living on the streets in the targeted count areas throughout King County. This included 1,884 people found in the areas targeted in the previous count (October 2004), and another 64 people in the new count area of Federal Way. This number is lower than the 2,216 counted in the October 2004 street count, but it is unknown how much of that reduction was due to the shift in timing from October to January.

The following table indicates the number of people living on the streets in the count areas of King County by area and by gender, as well as totals for each targeted count area.

### Unsheltered Homeless Persons

2006	Seattle	Kent	North County	East County	White Center	Federal Way	TOTAL
Men (adult)	656	31	13	52	4	14	770
Women (adult)	103	11	0	7	1	4	126
Gender unknown (adult) *	847	63	26	39	18	44	1,037
Minor (< 18)	12	0	0	1	0	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,618</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>1,946</b>

\*The large proportion of 'unknown' is due to the fact that it is often difficult to determine the gender of an individual who is clothed and covered to survive the night outside.

The places in which homeless people were found in 2006 had few significant differences from the previous count. A few areas of note include *doorways*, *under roads/bridges* and *vehicles*, whose percentages were higher in 2006. The percentage of people surviving homelessness by living in a parked vehicle has grown steadily over the past five years. Inhabited vehicles appear to be a strong mode of survival in suburban areas on the east and north sections of the county, as well as in Kent and Federal Way.

The number of those living under bridges/roadways has been rising in the last few years, though primarily in urban areas of Seattle. There were less people found in hand-built structures this year. Volunteer counters reported anecdotal evidence of numerous vacant structures in Seattle. It has been proposed that the availability of Winter Response shelter beds, accessible solely between October and March each year, may be a reason for these structures being empty.

Where people were found	2006*	2004	2003	2002	2001
Benches	0.5%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Parking garages	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Vehicle (estimate 2/vehicle)	33%	30%	31%	23%	22%
Under road/bridges	13%	11%	7%	9%	15%
Doorways	9%	5%	11%	8%	11%
City parks	1%	3%	1%	3%	5%
Bushes, undergrowth	3%	3%	4%	8%	3%
Bus stops	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Alleys	1%	2%	6%	2%	6%
Walking with no destination	16%	18%	15%	15%	17%
Structures	7%	11%	13%	13%	---
Other	13%	13%	8%	16%	19%

\*The gap in years is due to the change in the month in which the ONC was held. It was conducted in October 2004, and then in January 2006.

## Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing Survey

On January 26, 2006, 5,964 unduplicated persons who were homeless (comprising 3,980 households) accessed shelters and transitional housing programs across King County. Of these 2,463 were in emergency shelters, and 3,501 were in transitional housing programs.<sup>2</sup>

This represents a slightly smaller number of people in emergency shelter than in the October 2004 count.<sup>3</sup> The number of people identified as being in transitional housing increased by more than 1,300. This is primarily due to an increase in the number of transitional housing programs participating in the survey.<sup>4</sup>

The data that follows is taken from the surveys. Some of the data (i.e., age, race/ethnicity) describes the individuals served, while other data (i.e., income) is reflective of households. This data is very helpful in identifying issues and trends in homelessness. Care should be taken when interpreting this data, however, as the information reported in the survey solely reflects the number and demographics of individuals and households receiving shelter and transitional housing services at one particular point in time and does not reflect those in the homeless community who are not linked to services.

Readers should note the following factors when considering these figures:

- As noted above, demographics represent those accessing services, and do not necessarily reflect those who are not benefiting from shelter or transitional housing.
- Although we are able to provide a demographic description of people accessing shelters and transitional housing, who accesses programs is influenced by whom programs are designed to serve (i.e., the number, type and proportion of families with children that are counted in the survey is a function of the number and type of programs that are designed to serve families with children).
- Differences from year to year are also affected by the number of programs reporting and by programs closing and/or by new programs being added to the inventory.
- This year, data may also be affected by the change in the season of the count. 2006 marks the first year that the count took place in January after 25 years of implementing the count in the month of October.

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete listing of the emergency shelters and transitional housing programs in King County, see the *Inventory of Homeless Units and Beds: Seattle/King County Spring 2006* found at <http://www.metrokc.gov/dchs/csd/Housing/Reports.htm> (second document from the bottom).

<sup>3</sup> In 2006 the survey was completed by 58 emergency shelter projects. With one new year-round shelter and a number of shelters closing, there was a net 40 units / 40 year-round emergency shelter beds fewer than last year, in addition to a few shelters "off-line" the night of the count.

<sup>4</sup> One-hundred and twenty seven facility-based transitional housing projects completed the survey, including five newly opened transitional housing projects that added 132 units / 222 beds to our inventory, and approximately 50 existing projects that had not participated in the survey before. In addition, this year for the first time surveys were also completed for additional transitional housing units for families with children provided in scattered sites through six projects under a rental assistance program known as THOR (Transitional Housing Rental Assistance). On the night of the count there were 47 units / 160 beds under this program.

## DATA on INDIVIDUALS

The 5,964 persons served in emergency shelter and transitional housing on January 26, 2006 were in a variety of household compositions.

### Individuals by Household Type

Families with children	2,880
Couples without children	26
Single Women	853
Single Men	2,155
Unaccompanied Minors	50
Total Number of Individuals	<b>5,964</b>

### Race/Ethnicity

People of color, with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders, are significantly over-represented in the homeless population. This can be seen clearly when the racial composition of those being served by our emergency shelters and transitional housing programs is compared to the overall racial composition of King County.

### Race/Ethnicity of Individuals Served

	<u>General population in</u> <b>King County</b> <b>(including Seattle)</b>	<u>Homeless population in</u> <b>King County</b> <b>(including Seattle)</b>
Caucasian	75.5%	37%
African American/Black	5.4%	34%
Native American	.9%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11.3%	4%
Hispanic	5.5%	10%
Multi-racial	4.1%	6%
Unknown	-----	5%

“General Population” data is taken from the 2000 US Census, and can be found at

<http://www5.metrokc.gov/KCCensus/>

The following chart provides a more detailed look at the race/ethnicity of people utilizing homeless programs in King County on the night of the count.

### **Detailed Race / Ethnicity of Individuals Served**

American Indian or Alaska Native	4%
Asian	2%
African (Ethiopian, Nigerian, Kenya, etc.)	9%
Black or African American	25%
Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander	2%
Hispanic/Latino	10%
White	37%
Multi-Racial	5%
Other	1%
Unknown	5%

### **Age**

Of the 5,964 homeless persons accessing emergency shelter or transitional housing on the night of the count, 1,749 were children under the age of 18, and over 200 were senior citizens over the age of 65.

### **Ages of Persons Utilizing Homeless Programs in King County**

0 – 5 years	6 – 12 years	13 – 17 years	18 – 64 years	65+ years
778	564	407	4,012	203

### **Immigration status and Limited English Speaking**

Although immigrants/refugees were found in programs serving all household compositions, by far the greatest number were identified in families with children. While approximately half of the individuals who are counted are in families with children, 90 percent of those identified as immigrant/refugee are in families with children. Correspondingly, these programs reported that many of these persons were limited English speaking.

### **Individuals Identified as Immigrant/Refugee and Individuals Identified as Limited English Speaking**

	Individuals in Single Person Households	Individuals in Families with Children	Total
Immigrant/Refugee	66	633	699
Limited English Speaking	90	479	569

### **Disabilities / Health Concerns**

The most frequently cited disabilities among people who are homeless are chemical dependency and mental illness. Respondents were allowed to identify more than one disability for a given individual. Several programs do not collect information on disabilities, so while the raw

numbers themselves are instructive, one should not use this information to draw conclusions regarding the percentage of people being served who have disabilities.

#### **Disabilities / Health Concerns Reported for Persons Served**

Alcohol / Substance Abuse	1,262
Chronic Substance Abuse	(a subset of the above) 760
Mental Illness	1,228
Serious Mental Illness	(a subset of the above) 585
Dually Diagnosed*	489
Physical Disability	406
Developmentally Disabled	109
HIV/AIDS	149
Chronically Homeless <sup>5</sup>	1,143

\*Dually Diagnosed indicates both mental illness and alcohol/substance abuse.

#### **Domestic Violence / Physical Abuse**

According to the survey there were 946 persons accessing shelter and transitional housing programs who had experienced violence or abuse within the past year. Of those reported as experiencing such violence, 75 percent were accessing family programs.

#### **Military**

The 2006 survey identified 558 people who had served in the military. Ninety-eight percent of those identified as veterans were in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs serving single adults. More than 70 percent of the veterans were being served by emergency shelter programs (as opposed to transitional housing).

#### **Discharge from Institutions**

Working with "mainstream institutions" to ensure that release from these institutions does not immediately result in homelessness is an area of focus for homelessness prevention. Information regarding discharge from certain mainstream institutions within the past year was provided on a total of 552 persons. It should be noted that many programs do not collect this information.

#### **Instances of Discharge from Institutions**

Psychiatric Hospital	95
Hospital for Physical Illness	123
Foster Care System	71
Inpatient Drug/Alcohol Treatment	139
Jail / Prison or Work Release Facility	164
<b>TOTAL instances</b>	<b>592</b>

<sup>5</sup> "Chronically Homeless" is defined by the federal government as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." While locally we recognize that there are also family with children households that are long-term homeless, for purposes of this chart the federal definition is used.



## DATA on HOUSEHOLDS

### Household Composition

A total of 3,980 households were in emergency shelter or transitional housing programs on the night of the survey.

#### Household Composition of Households Served

Couples with children	149
Couples without children	13
Single Adult Female-headed Household	706
Single Minor Female-headed Household	10
Single Male-headed Household	44
Single Female	853
Single Male	2,155
Unaccompanied Minor (under 18)	50
<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>3,980</b>

Of the households served, 909 were “Family Households” (i.e., households with children). Eighty-four percent of the homeless family households served were headed by a single parent.

#### Composition of Family with Children Households

Two-parent Household	16%
Single Adult Female headed Household	78%
Single Minor Female headed Household	1%
Single Male headed Household	5%

### Household Income

More than 15 percent of households served by emergency shelter and transitional housing programs are employed, with an equal proportion having no income at all. Eighty percent of the households surveyed are known to have incomes between zero and 30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of three (\$21,885). Housing affordability is a clear issue at this income level. The AMI itself is *less than* the annual income needed to afford the fair market rent for a studio apartment in our region<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see *Out of Reach 2005* at <http://www.nlihc.org/oor2005/>. *Out of Reach* is a side-by-side comparison of wages and rents. The report calculates the amount of money a household must earn in order to afford a rental unit at a range of sizes (0, 1, 2, 3, and 4 bedrooms) at the area’s Fair Market Rent (FMR), based on the generally accepted affordability standard of paying no more than 30% of income for housing costs.

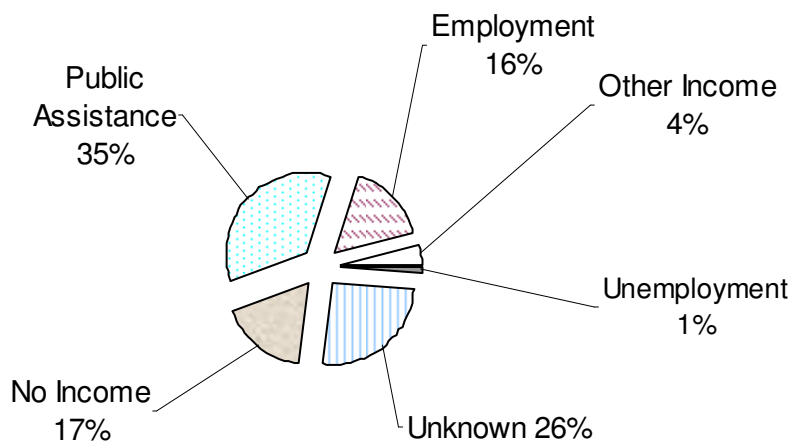
### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Zero Income	17%
Extremely Low Income ( $\leq 30\%$ AMI)	63%
Very Low Income ( $\leq 50\%$ AMI)	3%
Unknown	17%

### Primary Source of Household Income

General Assistance - Unemployable (GAU)	10%
Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act (ADATSA) Support	1%
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	13%
<i>Subtotal Disability Income = 24%</i>	
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	11%
Employed	16%
Unemployment Compensation	1%
Other Income	4%
No Income	17%
Unknown	26%

### Source of Income for Households Served



### Last Permanent Address

A “last permanent address” is defined as the address where a household last lived for a period of two months or more and does not include time spent in transitional housing or in institutions.

Last Permanent Address		
	Number	Percentage
Seattle	1,696	53%
North King County	161	5%
East King County	192	6%
South King County	405	13%
Washington State	273	9%
Out of State	469	14%
Unknown / Not Monitored	866	

### Length of Time and Recurrence of Homelessness

The length of time homeless this episode was reported for 2,450 households (62% of all households served<sup>7</sup>). Forty-seven percent of those households had been homeless for less than six months at the time of the survey. This length of time refers to the episode of homelessness they were experiencing at the time of the survey.

#### Length of Time Homeless - THIS EPISODE

	Less than 6 mos.	6 - 11 mos.	12 - 23 mos.	24 mos. or more	Unknown / Not Monitored	TOTAL
Number of Households	1,151	512	398	389	1,492	3,942
Proportion of Households where Length of Time Homeless is Known	47%	21%	16%	16%		

Information regarding the number of episodes of homelessness in the past two years was reported for 2,199 households (56% of all households served). The majority of households responding (62%) were experiencing homelessness for the first time in two years.

#### Episodes of Homelessness Within Last Two Years

	Only Time	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time	3 <sup>rd</sup> Time	4 <sup>th</sup> Time (or more)	Unknown / Not Monitored	TOTAL
Number of Households	1357	422	186	234	1743	3,942
Proportion of Households where Number of Episodes are Known	62%	19%	8%	11%		

<sup>7</sup> Many programs have not traditionally collected data regarding length of time homeless and recurrence of homelessness. With the current emphasis on chronic and long-term homelessness, however, we expect increasing numbers of programs to respond on this item.

## **Concluding Summary**

We can be certain that on January 26, 2006 there were 5,964 homeless persons accessing emergency shelter or transitional housing programs in King County. In addition, 1,946 men, women, and children were seen surviving without shelter in the areas of the County covered by the Count. It is recognized that many other members of our community also experience homelessness but are not reflected in this point-in-time count.

These people who are homeless are the inspiration for our community-wide effort to end homelessness in King County.

## **Acknowledgements**

The 2006 One Night Count could not have been realized without the participation and cooperation of many organizations and individuals. The street count portion of the Count was a collaboration of the Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH) and Operation Nightwatch. Homeless people surviving the night inside Harborview Medical Center's Emergency Care units were included thanks to the efforts of the nursing staff who took the time to assist with this event. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Dutch Schisler Sobering Center who provided us with their homeless census on this night.

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Central Headquarters - Tara Connor (Plymouth Housing Group) / Dan Wise (Archdiocesan Housing Authority)

East Urban - Terra Holcolmb (United Way)

Federal Way - Kelli O'Donnell (City of Federal Way)

Kent - Jennifer Malloy (Catholic Community Services)

North - George Smith (City of Shoreline)

University District - Rick Eberhardt (Partnership for Youth)

White Center - Katie Cote (White Center Community Development Association)

We are, as ever, deeply grateful to the providers who, in the midst of their work to shelter people who have no homes, took the time to complete the survey on the night of the count. The survey was administered by King County Housing and Community Development.

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For more information about homelessness in King County:

Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness [www.homelessinfo.org](http://www.homelessinfo.org)

Committee to End Homelessness in King County [www.cehkc.org](http://www.cehkc.org)  
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